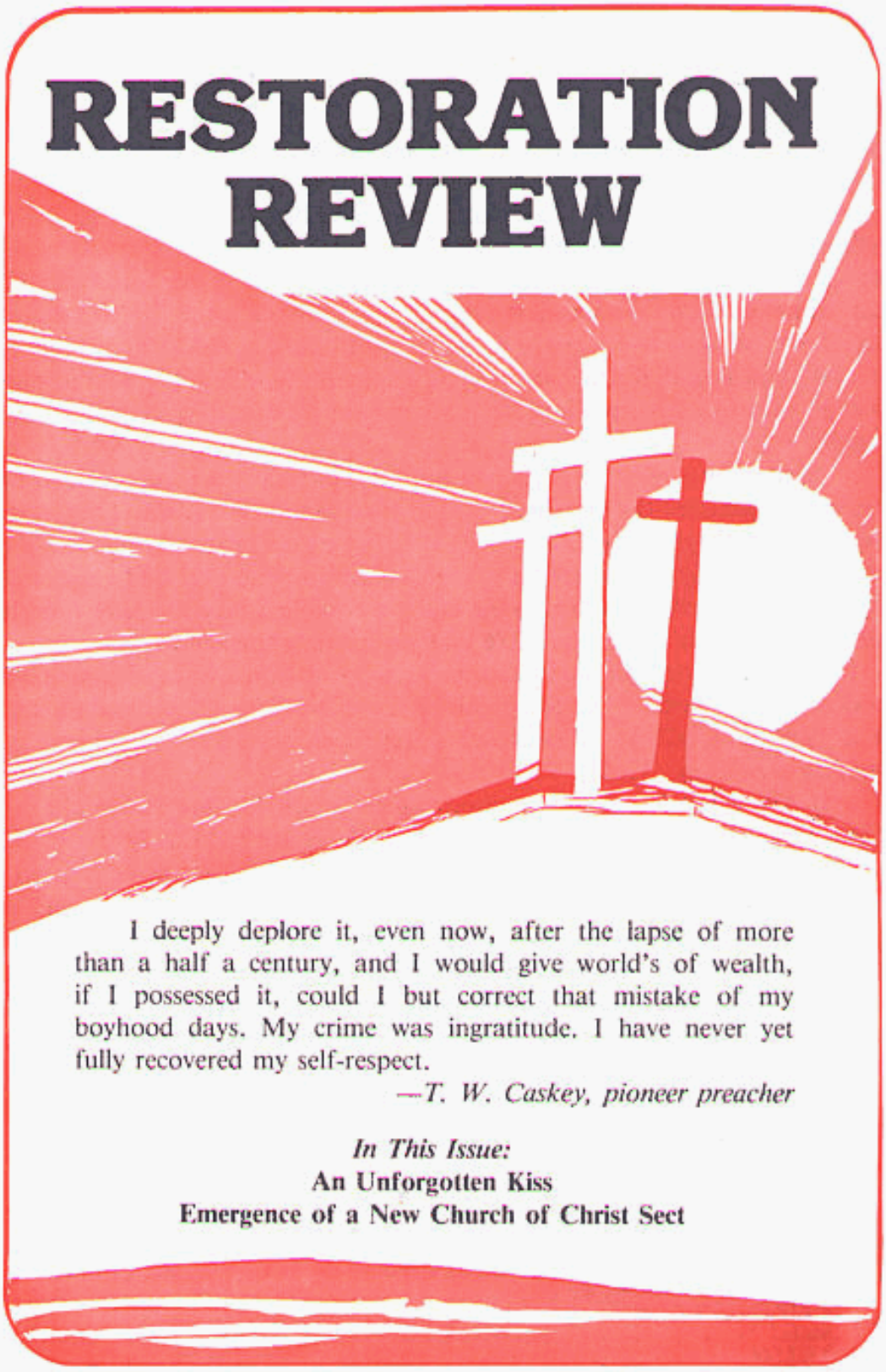
RESTORATION REVIEW



I deeply deplore it, even now, after the lapse of more than a half a century, and I would give world's of wealth, if I possessed it, could I but correct that mistake of my boyhood days. My crime was ingratitude. I have never yet fully recovered my self-respect.

—T. W. Caskey, pioneer preacher

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THE NONDISCLOSURE OF THE BIBLE

Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. - I Cor. 13:12

The burden of this installment is to show that while the Bible is the primary source of God's disclosure of himself to man, it is also an instrument of nondisclosure. The Bible is two-sided: it reveals the mind of God and yet it conceals the mind of God. Again and again the Bible makes it clear that we are not yet ready to make use of all that God will eventually reveal. And even that which is revealed is sometimes so obscure, and so subject to varying interpretations, that we cannot be sure that we understand aright.

Another way to say it is that the Bible has its treasures, those nuggets of truth that wonderfully enlighten us, but they cannot be raided. They must be mined with great care, and even then we never seem to penetrate the deeper veins of gold. We are faced with a contradiction that God must have intended: the Scriptures are simple and yet complex; they are easy and yet difficult; they are comprehensible and yet incomprehensible.

As the apostle Paul pondered the mystery of God's ways with man, he was moved to write: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Ro. 11:33)

It is remarkable that an inspired apostle of Christ, one who could say "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit" (I Co. 2:10), would see God's ways as unsearchable and past finding out. Perhaps he is saying what old Socrates said hundreds of years earlier: *the more we know the more we realize that we do not know.* If revelation is seen as a circle, the outer edge of which touches the unknown, then the larger the circle the larger the area that touches the unknown. And so, the more we know about God the more we realize that his judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out.

That is the essence of the apostle's amazing concession in I Co. 13:12: "Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face." Phillips renders it: "At present we are men looking at puzzling reflections in a mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face." The old KJV puts it starkly: "Now we see through a glass, darkly." In modern idiom that would be: *Up to now we are in the dark.*

Commentators tell us that the "mirror" that Paul refers to was of burnished bronze, the only kind they had, polished so that it gave dim reflections. If an apostle would refer to his understanding as dim reflections, how much more should we realize that we don't know much?

This should both humble us and comfort us. It should humble us because we are like a child wading along the edges of a vast ocean in that we are no more than in the shallows of God's overwhelming truth with the illimitable sea of reality stretching out before us, unfathomable and inscrutable. It should comfort us in that the great God of heaven, who, according to Isa. 45:15, pleases to hide himself, has indeed revealed his will to us, and we can understand sufficiently to respond to his overture and enter into a covenant-love relationship with him.

John Henry Newman caught the beauty of this truth in that great line from his *Lead, Kindly Light:* "I do not ask to see the distant scene - one step enough for me." There is light for our journey when we walk by faith, one step at a time. The mysteries and the unanswered questions will be there as "puzzling reflections," but the good news is that we can join the great apostle in declaring, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12)

Our religion would not be true religion if we could comprehend the God we worship. A religion void of mystery and awe would be sheer humanism, a religion of our own creation and one no greater than ourselves. This is why the Bible, a human book as well as a divine one, can only "in part" reveal the mind of God. If the mind of the omniscient God could be reduced to paper and ink, he would be neither omniscient nor God. We can only say something like: *to the extent that the magnanimous mind of God can be reduced to the pages of a book the Bible is the disclosure of the mind of God.*

The nondisclosure of the Scriptures is nowhere more evident than in the teaching of Jesus himself. In one of his recorded prayers he thanked the Father that "You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes" (Mt. 11:25), and yet "the babes," including his own disciples, had difficulty understanding. And so the parables, calculated to reveal the truth only to the initiated, are often wrapped in obscurity, even to the initiated. It is apparent from the records, especially in Mark, that even his own disciples often did not know what Jesus was talking about.

It seems odd that Jesus would ever have to say to his own disciples, "How is it that you do not understand?," as in Mk. 7:18, and odder still that when they didn't understand they were afraid to ask him to explain: "But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him" (Mk. 9:32). They sometimes drew a blank even when he spoke a parable, causing Jesus to say to them, almost impatiently, "Are you thus without understanding also?" (Mk. 7:18).

But we can hardly fault the disciples, for after two millennia of study and research we hardly scratch the surface in understanding what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God. And have we even begun to comprehend the nature of Christ himself? As the psalmist was moved to say of God's knowledge of him, we are moved to say of the mystery of Christ, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it" (Ps. 139:6).

That humble attitude of the psalmist is the point I wish to make in this essay. If we approach the Scriptures with bowed head and hat in hand, recognizing that "It is too wonderful for me," we might begin to mine some of its fine gold. The Bible's great truths are like the treasure that a man found and buried in a field, and, as Jesus told the story in a parable in Mt. 13:44, he sold all that he had and bought the field. And Jesus says he was motivated by *joy* in what he did. When we are moved by the joy of learning what God wants us to know, the obscurity of the Bible will be less of a problem.

One way to deal with the Bible's nondisclosure is to accept the fact that there are things we will never know, and take heart in the truth that we do not have to know. It would be interesting to know if there is an eon of time between the first and second verses of Genesis I. Some scholars, including Donald Grey Barnhouse, insist that there was an earlier creation of a perfect universe, but because of a rebellion God destroyed that earlier creation, and so Gen. 1:2 says, "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep."

And so, we are told, there might have been millions of years between those two verses, and we thus have not one creation but two, and not one fall and destruction but two. Barnhouse calls it "the Great Interval," and asserts: "That something tremendous and terrible happened to the first, perfect creation is certain" *(The Invisible War,* p.18). But what he calls certain is only speculation. The Scriptures nowhere indicate any such thing, and the original Hebrew for "The earth was without form and void" can be translated in more than one way, as John C. L. Gibson notes in his commentary.

This is an example of how theologians will build theories on the slightest hint rather than to humbly accept the Bible's nondisclosure.

If God had intended for us to know that there was an earlier perfect creation that somehow went awry and that there is a "great interval" between the first two verses of the Bible, he would surely have said so - and right between those two verses would have been the place for it! Nondisclosure! Do we wish to bring God out of hiding?

Jesus is coming soon! is another example of how we insist on knowing more than the Scriptures allow us to know. I think of the poor Shakers, who started in America back in 1794 under the "inner light" of Mother Ann Lee, who believed that Jesus was coming soon, the world would end, and so there was no time to marry and have families. Besides, sex was a sin.

They thrived, gaining 6,000 converts, all sworn to celibacy and communal living, in twenty communities. They were the most enduring of all the utopias of that period, their last community closing only in recent years. They were skilled craftsmen, making the finest furniture in the country. They might have endured had they believed in regeneration - *physical* regeneration, I mean!

Well, the grass has been growing on Mother Ann Lee's grave for almost two centuries, and Jesus still hasn't come. No one could have made her believe that back in 1794, for she had read all the signs (in the Bible of course!) and she knew. We still have our Mother Ann Lees, just as we had them long before 1794, and they are not likely to weigh the possibility that human history is now only in its infancy, and that it may yet be millennia before it all comes to an end. Because of the mercy of God, if no other reason. Too, God may be up to something on this earth that will yet take a long, long time (as we count time).

Don't misread me, for I accept the fact of Scripture that Jesus is coming "soon," and yet I must recognize that "soon" is wrapped in nondisclosure. The Scriptures close with Jesus saying, "Surely I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20). Since 2,000 years have passed since he said that, I must be less than dogmatic about what "quickly" means.

One would suppose that Jesus' surprising disclosure that "But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36) would deter the prophets in their prognostication, but it has not. It is noteworthy that some early manuscripts omit "nor the Son" (as reflected in the King James version), probably for theological reasons, for it was too much for some of the scribes to believe that even Jesus did not know the time of his second coming. That underscores God's nondisclosure, for there were some things in the divine plan that were not revealed even to Jesus. Even Jesus apparently could join the psalmist in declaring that "Clouds and darkness surround Him" (Ps. 98:2). How much more should we realize that it is beyond our province to serve as God's counselor, and to realize, as I Tim. 6:16 puts it, that God "dwells in unapproachable light."

The good news is that we don't need to know the time of our Lord's coming, and perhaps it should make no difference, for we should be ready, with our lamps trimmed, whenever it is. Such as I Cor. 1:7 is all we need to know: "eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God's nondisclosure should also make us slow to judge the eternal destiny of the masses of mankind, whether they be Buddhists, Hindus, or Moslems. It is not uncommon for missionaries to rally support on the ground that "they are going to hell if we do not reach them with the gospel." We have no right to make that judgment, for only He who said "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" can make that judgment. While the Scriptures condemn the disbeliever, they never condemn the unbeliever, thus distinguishing between those who

reject the gospel and those who have never heard it. We also go too far in assuming that God does not to some degree reveal himself in all the great religions of the world. Paul points to both the disclosure and the nondisclosure of God when he insists that among all peoples he has never left himself without witness (Acts 14:17), and has dealt with all nations "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Can we, like Paul, entertain the prospect that a good Moslem - such as Anwar Sadat? - might "grope for God and find him" in a culture and religion vastly different from our own? If such a thought nullifies in our minds the urgency of Christian missions, then we need to rethink the purpose of missions.

"'My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts,'" we are told in Isa. *55:8-9,* and that points up what I mean by the Bible's nondisclosure. If God's ways and thoughts are so vastly higher than our own, then ascertaining the mind of God, even in the Bible, has its limitation.

Another way of putting it is the way it reads in Dt. 29:29: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." That says it all. The Bible will mean more to us and we will treat it with greater awe when we remember that God has his secrets, and that even those things that are revealed are often "hard to understand," to quote Peter's estimate of some things Paul wrote. How could it be otherwise when the infinite God is revealing himself to finite man?

The essence of it all is that the light we seek is inaccessible and unapproachable (I Tim. 6:16), except in part, and so we can only grope around the periphery. And yet that light has such splendor that the darkness cannot apprehend it, and when we have but its distant glimmer it is sufficient to light our pathway to glory. And after awhile in God's tomorrow when we move somewhat closer how glorious will "the Sun of Righteousness" be to our redeemed souls. As for now, one step at a time is enough, and the light we have is sufficient for that. But even that light is only for those who both love it and seek it. *—the Editor*

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THE UNIFYING POWER OF THE CROSS

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself — Jn. 12.42

It takes power beyond the best of human effort to unite that which is divided. Unity forums are to be encouraged but these alone lack the power to unite. Creeds, whether written or unwritten, when subscribed to by all parties involved, may produce a superficial uniformity, but hardly the unity for which our Lord prayed. Even baptism, the powerful symbol that it is of union with Christ, has not the power within itself to unite believers, for people may see baptism alike and be baptized alike and still not be one. And however much doctrinal agreement may be prized it is hardly the bond of oneness, for two people (or an entire congregation) may see everything alike and still not be one in Christ.

We all know that people can sit side by side, pews full of them, and sing the same hymns, pray the same prayers, and read the same Scriptures and still be void of unifying power. Just as men may spend years together in the same prison cell and never become brothers, church folk can be locked into the same liturgical routine for a lifetime and never experience the power of unity in Christ.

We often point to the Bible as the basis of unity, but even the Bible makes no such claim for itself. No book has the power to meld estranged hearts into one, not even a book that comes from God. God did not give a collection of documents to heal broken hearts, but a Person. It is the wonderful Person of the Bible that makes wholeness possible, not the Bible itself, however much unanimity there may be in the study of it. If a book could have reconciled men to God and to each other, then the God of heaven could have looked to the printing press rather than the Cross. If we could have been saved (and made sisters and brothers) by the law or by a book, then Christ died for naught.

If unity is a matter of seeing the Bible eye-to-eye, then believers will never be united, for they never have and never will see the Bible alike. And if believers ever have been united, such as in the early centuries (and other times as well) when they died together for their faith, it was not because of doctrinal agreement upon the Bible but because of their common devotion to Jesus Christ.

Lest we forget that the earliest church, which we may think of as united amidst substantial diversity, had no New Testament Scriptures upon which to unite. If the little band of saints in Philippi were of "the same mind in the Lord," as the apostle's letter to them would indicate, it was not because they had read the New Testament and agreed on its contents, for the writings that make up that portion of the Bible were not yet determined and some were not yet written. So, it was something else (or Someone else) beside doctrinal conformity to a book that united them, and so, when Paul wrote to them he could refer not only to the fellowship of the Spirit but also to their abundant joy in Jesus Christ.

If you have the joy of the Lord in your heart and I have it in my heart, we are going to be one, in spite of our differences. In that little Philippian letter Paul names the basis of unity, even when referring to brethren with whom he had serious differences: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, and will rejoice" (Philip. 1:19). *Christ* is *preached!* Any other basis of unity is heresy, for only the Cross has the power to unite that which is divided.

It takes nothing from the importance of the Bible to acknowledge that it never has been and never can be the basis of Christian unity. The Bible as the word of God strengthens and enriches the unity and fellowship that is found only in Christ. It is enough to allow the Bible itself to describe its function: "All Scripture inspired of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Devotion and loyalty to Jesus Christ is the basis and source of our oneness in the faith, while the Scriptures are given to "build us up" as the family of God on earth, as Acts 20:32 shows. Children are a great blessing to a marriage, but not the basis of the marriage. A marriage must find its oneness in the mutual love of the man and wife. Children do not produce the marriage but the marriage the children. So with the Scriptures. The Bible did not produce the church but the church the Bible. Unity in Christ came first, and out of that united witness came the Scriptures.

The apostle John serves as interpreter of what Jesus meant when he declared, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" in Jn. 12:32. One might conclude that Jesus was referring to his ascension, but John tells us in the following verse that Jesus was alluding to "what death He would die." It is remarkable that Jesus would refer to being "lifted up" on the Cross as the power whereby all people would be drawn to him. Not his teaching, not his life, not even his resurrection, but the Cross. The use of *"IF* I be lifted up" really means *"When* I be lifted up," for there was no question in his mind but what he would go to the Cross. When that happens, he was saying, the drawing power of unity will be a reality.

When you are drawn to that Cross and I am drawn to that Cross, we are together, in spite of all our faults and warts and diversities. If we are separated by factions, parties and divisions, we don't have to wait until everything is resolved and every point settled, for that will never happen. And we don't have to concentrate on trying to get closer to each other, such as whooping it up at a unity conference. The means, the source, the power is already available. We only need to move within the shadow of the Cross. All who do that will experience the unifying power of the Cross.

However much people may be separated, whether by race, sex, class, or creed, they can find unifying power in the Cross. Each step we take toward the Cross puts us one step closer to each other. Once we stand at the Cross together with empty cups to be filled by His grace, our differences will not be as important to us as when we stand at shouting distance from each other. But some differences are important and need to be dealt with. Let them be dealt with within the shadow of the Cross and in the spirit of that love that prayed "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!"

That is the only unity there can be. In that unity of love and acceptance of each other as equals, and not as "erring brothers," we can discuss our differences - like Paul and Peter did, *within* the unity and fellowship of Christ. Fellowship at the Cross must come first, then discussion of differences. Not the other way around. If we allow the Cross to wait until we iron out all the problems, we will never make it to the Cross. The power to unite is not in doctrinal unanimity but in the Cross.

This is why the apostle Paul addressed a church riddled with factions, not in terms of doctrinal conformity, but in terms of the power of the Cross: "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). In the same context Paul refers to "the message of the Cross" as the power of God (1:18), which is the power to unite as well as the power to save. If we would but be like the great apostle by making the Cross our message rather than our sectarian peculiarities, we would discover the power to overcome our superficiality

In meeting each other at the Cross we not only find power but also joy. Our Lord endured the Cross and ignored its shame "for the joy that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2). He rejoiced in the face of the Cross not only because it marked the end of his earthly ordeal and that he would be returning to the Father, but also because in the Cross the Father's purpose for the unity of all mankind could be realized. In Eph. 1:10 that purpose is described as "that He might gather together in one all things in Christ," and that includes "all things in heaven and upon earth." That seems to include all of nature, all the animal kingdom, all the universe, as well as all mankind. So, there is great significance in Christ's assurance that "When I am lifted up I will draw all peoples to Myself." His mission was to unite all things in heaven and on earth, and this pointed to the unifying power of the Cross.

We are a people who have always been concerned, and perhaps rightly so, as to where to draw the line in terms of unity and fellowship. There is obviously a place to draw the line since everyone is not a Christian, but we are reluctant to draw the line only where Christ drew it, at the Cross. He accepts all who come to the Cross. Should we require

more. In Jn. 3:14 he likened his being lifted up on the Cross to the serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness. In Moses' time the people were healed when they looked upon the serpent. They did have to look in simple trusting faith.

And so we today must look to the Cross for our healing. When people do that we should meet them there in loving acceptance, for they have yielded themselves in humble obedience to Christ. That is unity and fellowship. If they are deficient in some ways (and who is not?) there will be time enough, in an atmosphere of loving forbearance, to show them the way of the Lord more perfectly. They in turn will help us to see and to do the way of the Lord more perfectly. *—the Editor*

There is but one way to tranquility of mind and happiness, and that is to account no external things thine own, but to commit all to God. *— Epictetus*

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Sand Creek Redivivus . . .

LOOKING IN ON THE DENTON LECTURES

(Or, The Emergence of a New Church of Christ Sect)

Those who have studied the history of the Church of Christ know that it was first listed as a separate body from the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ in the U.S. Census of 1906. The actual separation was decades in the making. It was in Sand Creek, Illinois (near Windsor) in 1889 that a gathering of conservative Disciples heard Daniel Sommer read the "Address and Declaration" in which he withdrew from the "liberals" in such forthright terms as, "We will no longer recognize them as brethren." He afterwards stated in his journal that "the Church of Christ will soon be as separate from the Christian Church as the Christian Church now is from the denominations. Hallelujah!"

Thus the Church of Christ began with shouts of hallelujah and bulls of excommunication. As heirs of Sand Creek we in the Church of Christ have had a two-headed albatross draped across our necks. One head has imposed upon us the mentality that if we cannot agree we have to divide. Because of the introduction of "humanisms,' to use Sommer's language, such as the preacher-pastor system, missionary societies, and instrumental music, the conservatives presumed they had to leave and start a "sound" church. This mentality has divided and sub-divided us until we now have umpteen factions among us, each supposing itself to be the one and only true Church of Christ.

The other head of the albatross has shackled us with the notion that unity and fellowship are based upon doctrinal uniformity, or that fellowship is equated with endorsement. Sommer supposed that if he had fellowship with a church with a piano that he would be endorsing instrumental music. To fellowship a brother, Sommer concluded, is to endorse or approve of all he believes and practices. This cruel fallacy, however sincerely believed, has been our undoing. This is why our well- meaning brethren will get up and walk Out of a church that they suppose is a true "Church of Christ" once they discover the presence of an organ. To sit through a service where an organ plays is to be a "partaker of another man's sins." Fellowship means approval or endorsement! That is what Sand Creek bequeathed to us.

And Sand Creek gave us our distinct denominational name. Until then we were variously called Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, Church of Christ, and even Church of God. But at Sand Creek brother Sommer ruled that "We all can believe that the body of Christians in any given place should be called the 'Church of Christ.'" And he used capital C for Church! However many factions we may spawn, there will never be one with any name except Church of Christ, with or without the small *c*. That is *our* name, you better believe it, at least since Sand Creek, and we don't want anyone swipin' it!

When I recently attended the Sixth Annual Denton Lectures, only a few furlongs from my home, I was reminded of Sand Creek. The shadow of the two-headed albatross was evident. To be in fellowship we have to agree on all "the issues." To preserve "the faith" we may have to divide. Sand Creek redivivus! The Pearl Street Church of Christ, which sponsors the event, only recently issued a bull of excommunication, which was not unlike Sommer's Sand Creek declaration, in which they withdrew fellowship from other Churches of Christ in the city.

The bull expressed regret that they could no longer enjoy fellowship with the Singing Oaks Church of Christ. What Sommer called "humanisms" the preacher at Pearl Street, called "liberal leanings," which he listed as using denominational films, a cookout on the parking lot, using false teachers, promoting a humanistic "social gospel" by building a "fun and games" recreational center, and for accepting the Fellowship Church of Christ, which is where Ouida and I are members.

The use of "false teachers" is a serious charge, but the reference is to well-known, highly-respected Church of Christ ministers, such as Jim Woodruff, Gary Beauchamp, Bill Banowsky, and Jim Hance. And Jim Hance was a predecessor to Dub McClish at Pearl Street! One wonders how Jim so soon became a "false teacher." Apparently one fits that category if he does not imbibe the spirit now emanating from Pearl Street and the Denton Lectures.

After naming Leroy Garrett as the instigator of Denton's liberalism and Bill Banowsky as a supporter of Billy Graham and a visiting minister in a Methodist church, the Pearl Street *Perspective,* as the bull was called, closed in Sand Creek-like fashion: "By embracing brethren

Garrett and Banowsky, Singing Oaks has thereby embraced Billy Graham, Methodism, the Disciples of Christ, and others. Thus they are now accepting some as brethren who are not God's children. To do so removes them from fellowship with God and His faithful children (1 John 1:6-7; 2 John 9- 11)."

Who are these brethren who dare to serve as God's counselor and thus dictate who His children are and who are not? And whence comes this logic that when a church invites a man to speak it thereby approves of everything the man ever did? It goes this way: Singing Oaks invited Bill Banowsky to speak; Bill Banowsky spoke to a Methodist church; therefore, Singing Oaks embraces Methodism.

The sixth edition of the Annual Denton Lectures (ADL) further reflected this spirit of withdrawal from all other Churches of Christ not of the ADL persuasion. I use ADL for ready reference, not in disrespect in any sense. My presence was moderately conspicuous since my name, along with Carl Ketcherside's, was frequently invoked from the pulpit. But that is OK, for these brethren believe they should condemn concepts long promoted by Carl and me in our journals. So the "Ketcherside-Garrett" reference is a convenient one for them. That doesn't bother me at all, even if it does Ouida (she tries to get me not to go!), and I am confident that it does not bother Carl. All that is part of the struggle in freeing ourselves from . . . Sand Creekism. I go right on loving and accepting them anyhow, and there's not much they can do about that. They, too, are my brothers in Christ, and I intend to treat them as such.

There's an amusing note about the ADL reference. Several folk who came to the lectureship (and there were hundreds there from several states) called us or came by for a visit. One family called Ouida and told her they were here for the ADL. Ouida thought that must be some drug control convention! No, that is not a drug thing, I told her, that's the Annual Denton Lectures at the Pearl Street Church of Christ. It is heresy control, not drug control! At the church they had ADL in large letters behind the speaker. So, ADL is a quick reference for them as well as my purposes herein.

Another amusing note is that when ADL folk came for a visit they had to do so at their own risk, and it was just as well with them that no one knew. "We'll not breath a word," we assured them. After all, since Leroy Garrett is a heretic, and John Doe visits with Leroy Garrett, it follows that John Doe is . . . It is invincible logic!

What is not so amusing but grievously tragic is that we seem to have yet another division among us. The ADL branded other Churches of Christ and preachers as unfaithful. In reference to foreign missions, only those churches of the ADL persuasion are "sound," the others being "liberal." They have their own papers and schools. Impressed as I was that a new faction is forming, I asked some of the ADL leaders if I were reading events aright. "Is a new

division forming?," I asked Tom Bright of Ft. Worth, a good and amiable brother who probably knows as much about all this as anyone. He conceded that a new division was in the making, but he was not sure what form it would take.

Those less acquainted with Churches of Christ may be confused as to who the ADL brethren are. They are not to be confused with the "Conservative" Churches of Christ, sometimes referred to as "Antis," (or *anti-Herald of Truth)* which is now a generation old. We have long since had a Church of Christ of that persuasion in Denton and all across the country, which I also sometimes visit. The ADL folk might be described as within the mainline Church of Christ tradition but reactionary to change and far right wing. They are like the Church of Christ of the 1940's. Their heroes are of that generation. In fact, when I am with them I somewhat delight in the nostalgia. It is like going back to when I was a boy growing up in the "right" church. They do things like count the number of verses that a preacher quotes in his sermon, measuring its virtue thereby. And they insist on preaching against instrumental music as a grievous sin, and scoring the denominations. Old-time Church of Christism! But to them, and they are as sincere and honest as the rest of us, it is defending the truth. There are hundreds of congregations of this persuasion.

Looking in on the ADL had its blessings. I got to see, hear or greet many old4imers, some of whom I have known for forty years, and they were all there: Ira Rice, Tom Warren, Roy Deaver, Robert Taylor, Johnny Ramsey, Bill Cline Editor, *Firm Foundation),* Bert Thompson, Gary Workman, to name a few. Then there were the rank-and-file brethren: a couple who had me in their home in Florida 35 years ago, people with whom I attended school, etc. I love them all and I cherish the memories.

The surprise blessing, however, was evidence that the ADL brethren talk about Ketcherside-Garrett so much, and read our stuff so critically, that we are influencing them when they may not realize it. Alan Highers, a prince of a man and an appellate judge in Tennessee, exhorted the ADL ministers to preach against instrumental music ("Like we used to"), which I expected, but he added his misgiving, "But I am not comfortable with the argument on 'the law of silence,'" which I did not expect. Carl Ketcherside and I have insisted for decades that "the law of silence," which has been the basis of the argument for the sinfulness of instrumental music, is nonsense. It would take a judge, I presume, to convince the ADL, if they are convinced, that no law can be drawn from the silence of Scripture.

I hope H. A. "Buster" Dobbs, one of the editors of the *Firm Foundation,* gets the message from one of his own (If I had said what the judge said it would have been branded heresy!), for you will remember an open letter in this journal urging brother Dobbs *not* to make such an argument at a unity forum with our Christian Church brothers. The ADL, by the way, is

strongly opposed to the unity forums, for there is no reason to meet with Christian Church folk unless they show a willingness to give up the instrument, which they make a condition to fellowship.

It was interesting that Judge Highers went on to say that we can refer to the *"significance* of Biblical silence," the very term I used in my appeal to brother Dobbs. Yes, of course, there may be significance to the Bible's silence on any subject, but what is made of that silence is a matter of opinion, not a matter of law.

I thought it noteworthy that amidst all the denunciations of instrumental music that one of their own number would question the main argument against it, the law of silence, from their own platform.

That is not all. Gary Workman, one of their editors, commenting on 1 John 1:7 ("If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"), which is home base for the ADL in drawing the line of fellowship. That is, if you use instrumental music, etc. you are not walking in the light and therefore not to be fellowshipped. Gary conceded that one might be innocently wrong about some things and still walk in the light. He added that that does not mean that one might believe anything and everything and still walk in the light.

Again, that is what Carl and I have been saying all these years, but it is not what *they* have been saying in opposing us. They have insisted that we have to agree on all these points of dispute before we can walk in the light and be in fellowship. I agree with what Gary Workman is *now* saying. Brethren may sincerely differ or be innocently wrong about some things and walk in the light of Christ together, and those differences might be whether we have a Sunday School, how we interpret the millennium, or whether we use an instrument. Honest, sincere differences. So, one can be honestly in error about the instrument and still walk in the light. I also agree with him that we cannot believe any fool thing or nothing and still walk in the light and be in fellowship with Christ.

So you can see why I remain an optimist after all these years. It may be that Sand Creek redivivus will rise up and crush Sand Creekism among us. After all, even Daniel Sommer lived to regret the spirit of Sand Creek. The Holy Spirit may be at work in some of us even while we deny his presence, and even in our factiousness we may sow the seeds of unity. One of the great lines in Scripture is in Gal. 1:23: "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." Never give up hope. Today's factionist may be tomorrow's unitist.

That is one more reason why we should love and accept as equals *all* those for whom Christ died, and not just those who are in our party. A true *liberal* (It is a great word; look it up in the dictionary) is one who is not narrow or prejudiced in his thinking, one who is open to

new ideas and experiences, and one who listens with respect to those with whom he differs - those to his right and to his left alike. No one is so illiberal as the "liberal" who looks down his nose at those he presumes to be beneath him. When we are so judgmental as to say "I cannot abide those people," we need to ask ourselves if we truly follow Jesus Christ.

I invite you to consider my rule: I love and accept all those that Jesus loves and accepts. That includes women, children, lepers, prostitutes, sinners, the maimed, the sick, the demonic, and even the errant Pharisees. And so I love and accept *all* my sisters and brothers in Christ because Jesus accepts them. Like him, I accept them all and agree with none! —*the Editor*

Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands morn. —*Robert Burns*

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AN UNFORGOTTEN KISS

In his *Seventy Years in Dixie*, F. D. Srygley, who was an associate editor of the *Gospel Advocate a* century ago, tells a touching story from the life of pioneer preacher T. W. Caskey, around whom the book evolves. Caskey's "Seventy Years" began about 1820 and reached two decades beyond the Civil War. The book describes the South's incredible ordeal during the war, naming the Southern cause as lost long before the conflict ended. The South would not surrender until it was devastated. Consequently there was untold suffering and agony. Caskey says that virtually every home either lost a loved one or received one back from the War injured or dismembered. The South lay prostate with its homes and farms burned, its towns and cities devastated, and its people demoralized. Freed slaves wandered aimlessly, begging for food from those who were themselves hungry. Caskey states that even though he lived through it there was no way for him to describe the horror of it all.

But the story Caskey tells that I want to pass along to you is not about the War but about the black mammy that took care of him from the time of his birth until he left home for school. The story grows out of life in Mississippi during the ante-bellum days when the mammy in a slave-owning home was like a member of the family. The mammy loved the children she cared for as if they were her own and they loved her as if she were their mother. She was often closer to them than was their mother. She was in charge of the children and their affairs, which gave her dominance over the other slaves, and even the mother would usually yield to her wishes when it came to the children. However attentive the mother might be, it was usually the mammy who was always there when the children were sick or got hurt.

Since Caskey's mother died when he was born, another common tragedy in that era, his mammy was the only mother he ever knew. He tells how she was always there to kiss away his hurts, to see him off to school, and to save back her own "sweets" so that he could have them. She magnified his successes and minimized his failures. He was confident that she loved him as much as she loved her own children who shared her slave quarters. Even after young Caskey left home for school, he would always on his return visits go to the slave quarters to see his mammy before going up to the big house. She drank in every word of his success stories as if they were her own.

Once Caskey was out of school and working as a blacksmith, he would come home about twice a month, and he always met with his mammy at church. She would put her black arms around him and kiss his cheek as only a mother would. And Caskey welcomed this, for she was his mammy.

Time passed and one day when Caskey was visiting the old home place he had his sweetheart at his side. When mammy saw him she hurried toward him and, as usual, gave him a bear hug and a kiss on the cheek. But this time, with his girl friend at his side, Caskey was embarrassed. After all, as she would likely see it, he was being embraced and kissed by a nigger. He then did something that he was to regret for the rest of his life. He spurned her embrace and turned away with proud rejection. In his autobiographical notes he describes it as one of the meanest things he ever did, a deplorable act for which he could not forgive himself. He recalls the occasion with painful memory:

> I deeply deplore it, even now, after the lapse of more than a half a century, and I would give world's of wealth, if I possessed it, could I but correct that mistake of my boyhood days. My crime was simply base ingratitude. 1 blushed for shame that I should be thus kissed by an old negress in the presence of my young lady friend. I have never yet fully recovered my self-respect, when I think how I blushed to be kissed and loved by one who had so nobly earned her right to a mother's affections and privileges, for all she had done for me during my helpless, infant orphanage.

Years passed before Caskey again visited the old home place, and mammy had passed on to her reward. He tells how he visited her grave and poured out tears of repentance over the way he had treated the woman whose only crime was loving the boy she had raised. He recalled his mean and contemptible act as if it were but yesterday. There by her grave in the wood he solemnly vowed to cherish her memory and strive to imitate her love and labors for the motherless and homeless, and he resolved to live for the amelioration of the sufferings of his mammy's down-trodden race.

What makes this such a gripping story is Caskey's inconsolable regret over what he had done, even after half a century. Even in his old age he looked back on the foulest deed of his life and wrote with a penitent tear, "I will yet atone for it in a measure, if I am so fortunate as to meet her ransomed soul on the glory-gilded shore of eternity." He hoped that in heaven he would be able to walk right up to her and throw his arms around her and plant a kiss on her cheek, right there before all the angels.

This tender and compelling story of an unforgotten kiss tells us something important about life: *it is very important how we treat people.* And it is especially important how we treat people who are not in a position to benefit us, such as little children, the poor, the aged. Too, the story drives home the point that if we do not regret slighting such people, we should. We might well see ourselves weeping at the grave of someone we maltreated, even if by careless neglect. But we cannot turn back the clock an we cannot change what we did yesterday. "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, 'It might have been.'" But we can live with greater love and deeper sensitivity tomorrow.

And don't you think the story of the unforgotten kiss should make us more eager to love and accept all those for whom Christ died? If we are quick to criticize and eager to draw the line we may live to regret it. If this story helps us to realize how terribly wrong it is to reject someone without a compelling reason, then it is a blessed story. And if it causes us to drop a repentant tear over the way we have treated someone and to resolve to be more sensitive toward hurting people, then it is a story that serves us well. —*the Editor*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

I attended a community-wide Thanksgiving service at a Presbyterian church in which a woman minister (Methodist) was the speaker. I happened to sit next to a Visitor to our city who was also a woman minister (Presbyterian), who told me afterward that it was unusual indeed to be a woman minister in a small Oklahoma town. Ours is indeed a changing world, even in Oklahoma and Texas. It is a change that might bring more responsible and more meaningful preaching to the pulpit. Business people in our city ran a full-page ad in our local paper inviting everyone to the Thanksgiving service, and the house was full. Insofar as I could tell I was the only one present from the Church of Christ, which is bad news, but the good news is that we have many in the Church of Christ in our city who would not have been uncomfortable in an ecumenical service like that. Our problem is that we have such a habit of

exclusivism that it is difficult for us to break away and enjoy the fellowship of other Christians. And there are still so few who will dare to lead us in new directions. We are consequently a terribly deprived people. Self-deprived!

Buff Scott, Jr. is one of those who would lead us into greener pastures, as he does in his publication *The Reformer,* 1003 Pilot Ave., Cherokee, IO 51012 He writes things like "We need to differentiate between the ecclesia of Jesus Christ and the non-instrument Church of Christ or 'church of Christ.'" The sub rate is $3.00 per annum.

Given O. Blakely, 10701 W. 124th Ave., Cedar Lake, IN 46303 has proposed Project Plus 60, which he envisions as a means of tapping the wisdom and experience of some of the older leaders among Christian Churches/Churches of Christ in hopes of enriching our own faith and reaching out to a lost world. He wants to start with Fred O. Blakely, Dwaine Dunning, Don DeWelt, Seth Wilson, Carl Ketcherside, and Leroy Garrett. When I saw that list, I remembered that 30 years ago four of those men (the last four) met in a debate over instrumental music But even that far back it was different. I wrote Carl that I thought we should approach the discussion with the attitude that Seth and Don were as much our brothers as we were to each other and that no lines should be drawn. Carl opened the debate by reading that letter, which I did not know he was going to do. It set a tone for the debate that was so different that the large gathering was far more impressed with the way we treated each other than the arguments we made, which were not all that great. It did something else, for it helped us to see that we can accept each other and enjoy fellowship together and let things like instrumental music be determined by each congregation's preference and opinion. We hope Given Blakely's project will provide other such liberating experiences, leading our people to higher ground and greater vision. Write to him for more information.

Ouida served 25 people at our home on Thanksgiving, all her kith and kin. We borrowed chairs from our church and had folk at three tables. We had everything here from a pig farmer (her brother) to an otorhinolaryngologist (a nephew), mostly Church of Christ folk, from left to right. They were here in part to see Ouida's mother, who lives with us. I was glad when they came and glad when they left, and happy that they didn't take Ouida with them. Ouida offers to entertain my clan, but I could muster no such number that could bear to be with each other that long. But we will be going into Dallas Christmastime to my only sister's home where "the five of us" (there were ten of us) will get together once more with our families. We wish for you all a happy holiday season.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

We have appreciated your efforts to bring about a new spirit in the relationship between our churches. We know many changes have taken place in the thinking of the brethren. We congratulate you and Ouida upon your recent picture and hope to see others as time goes on. — *Max Moon, Sweet Home, OR*

I attended Freed-Hardeman College and heard your name, along with brother Ketcherside's, slandered quite a bit. No explanation was given as to what the great crime was that you had committed against the brotherhood. After reading much of your material I now understand your position and believe you to be more biblically based and kinder in spirit, or more Christlike, than those who have opposed you. May God forgive their sectarian spirit and open their eyes to the truth of Jesus. — *Name withheld*

About Benjamin Franklin's motion for prayer at the Constitutional convention, this quotation reveals the strong convictions the framers of the Constitution bad about separation of church and state: "The delegates failure to invoke divine guidance was not inadvertent. In response to a motion by Benjamin Franklin that prayers for the assistance of heaven be said each morning, the Convention adjourned to avoid taking a vote."

(I understand that James Madison's notes, the most reliable record of the convention, reveal that Franklin's motion for prayer was received favorably by the delegates, but since there was no money in the treasury to pay a chaplain to come in and pray, the motion was allowed to die. That reveals their idea of the clergy. I suspect Franklin himself could have uncorked a prayer that would have gotten heaven's attention. What is significant about that anecdote is that such a motion was made.) — *Ed.*

Your writings, along with certain others have had a great influence on my thinking, and I am persuaded on many others as well. The Body needs such work and I pray the Lord will bless you in your efforts for a long while. — *Don E. Neff, Flat River, MO*

Thirty-five years! As you continue to climb upward toward the summit of your Nebo of understanding, you can look back upon what may now seem as wilderness wandering. From your new heights, you have a panoramic view of the promised land of fuller understanding. Like Moses, you will not be permitted to enter in but you can be thrilled with the view of peaks and valleys yet unexplored. Only when God takes you beyond earth's limitations can you fully know. How thrilling it will be to sit before the omniscient Creator as be explains the mysteries of the ages. Some of the stones over which we stumbled will seem as grains of sand then. — *Cecil Hook, New Braunfels, TX*

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BOOK NOTES

The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries are distinctive in that they seek to set forth what the text actually says and what it means, and to do so concisely. They deal with the main issues without being technical. We can send you the volume on Matthew at the special price of only $4.05 postpaid. If you like it, you can add other volumes at your own pace.

This Bicentennial year is a good time to read *An American Dream* by John W. Whitehead, which shows that resistance, rights, and hope are at the heart of the American experiment. This is a tough look at America's new philosophy of secularism. The chapter on the American mind, which the author traces to the Declaration of Independence, will thrill you. $8.95 postpaid.

The *National Review* described Richard Wurmbrand's *Tortured for Christ* as shattering book, if you read it you can never forget it." The author spent 14 years in Communist prisons, and he tells about the anguish of brainwashing and mental cruelty. And to think that thousands continually suffer in this way! As God's people in such a world we need to be informed on what is going on. $5.50 postpaid

We recommend the *New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* as second to none, Strong in archaeology, it has over *450* illustrations. Up to date, easy to read. $22.50 postpaid.

One good way to study history is biography, which is true of our own Restoration history. A good place to start is the *Life of Elder John Smith,* a gripping story not only of a great pioneer preacher but of early American history as well, $12.50 postpaid.

We have back copies of this journal for many years past, which you can have at 18 issues for only $3.00, selected at random, but all at least five years old.

Memoirs of Alexander Campbell is still available at $23.95 postpaid, and the *Campbell-Rice Debate* at $21.95.These are essential for any serious study of our heritage.

We still offer as a bonus *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett (value $21.95*)* when you send in *8* subs, new or renewal, at $3.00 per name (total $24.00), or you may order the book at $21.95, and if you remit in advance we pay the postage.

You may order all five of our bound volumes of *Restoration Review,* which include the years 1977-1984, for only $40.00 postpaid. These are hardbound, matching volumes of high quality, with dust jackets.

Ouida is in the process of transferring our subscription list to our computer, which means that for this issue some of you are addressed as usual. Those with computer labels will notice your expiration date, such as 2/88 3/88, which means you should renew when you receive the Feb.1988 issue and that the Mar.1988 issue is your last issue. We will also ink stamp these issues, informing you further. But you may renew at anytime and your time will be advanced accordingly. By the January issue we should be completely computerized.

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